

SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE March 5, 2009
BILL NO. HB 203

House Bill 203
March 5, 2009
Presented by Chris Smith
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Deputy Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

FWP understands and agrees with the intent behind HB 203. We appreciate the sponsor's willingness to work with FWP to develop amendments to the original bill to meet his intent in practical ways.

The bill, as amended, HB 203 requires FWP to post information on our website and, where practical, to notify citizens in the area, regarding the general location where we introduce or transplant wolves, bears or mountain lions. Of these three species, FWP only relocates bears at this time. It also requires FWP to let the public know, through the media, how to find the information on our website. These are reasonable steps FWP can and will take to ensure the public is informed about relocation of wildlife.

HB 203 also requires FWP to obtain landowner permission before transplanting any animals onto their property. This provision was included in the bill as the result of an incident that occurred several years ago when some unidentified FWP employees allegedly released antelope on private property without contacting the landowner. If that in fact occurred, it was a violation of both FWP policy and probably other laws and would have resulted in disciplinary action had it been brought to agency management's attention. FWP has no problem with making it clear in Title 87 that our employees cannot transplant any species onto private land without landowner permission.

HB 203 would enhance communication between FWP and the public we serve.

Thank you.